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THE SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE



OF

OUR INSTITUTIONS:

AN ORATION

DELIVERED BY REQUEST OF THE CITIZENS AT NEWPORT, R. I.

JULY 4TH, 1861.

BY HENRY JAMES.

BOSTON:

TICKNOR AND FIELDS.

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[The Oration as printed contains several passages omitted in the delivery.]

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University Press, Cambridge :
Printed by Welch, Bigelow, and Company.

O R A T I O N.

A FRIEND observed to me a few days since, as I accepted the invitation with which your Committee of Arrangements has honored me, to officiate as your orator on this occasion, that I could hardly expect, under the circumstances, to regale my auditors with the usual amount of spread-eagleism. I replied, that that depended upon what he meant by spread-eagleism. If he meant what was commonly meant by it, namely, so clearly defined a Providential destiny for our Union, that, do what we please, we shall never fall short of it, I could never, under any circumstances, the most opposed even to existing ones, consent to flatter my hearers with that unscrupulous rubbish. No doubt many men, whose consciences have been drugged by our past political prosperity, do fancy some such inevitable destiny as this before us,— do fancy that we may become so besotted with the lust of gain as to permit the greatest rapacity on the part of our public servants, the most undisguised and persistent corruption on the part of our municipal and private agents, without forfeiting the Providential favor. From that sort of spread-eagle-

ism I told my friend that I hoped we were now undergoing a timely and permanent deliverance. But if he meant by that uncouth word an undiminished, yea, a heightened confidence in our political sanity and vigor, and in the fresh and glowing manhood which is to be in yet larger measure than ever the legitimate fruit of our institutions, I could assure him that my soul was full of it, and it would be wholly my fault if my auditors did not feelingly respond to it.

I never felt proud of my country for what many seem to consider her prime distinction, namely, her ability to foster the rapid accumulation of private wealth. It does not seem to me a particularly creditable thing, that a greater number of people annually grow richer under our institutions than they do anywhere else. It is a fact, no doubt, and like all facts has its proper amiable signification when exposed to the rectifying light of Truth. But it is not the fact which in a foreign land, for example, has made my heart to throb and my cheeks to glow when I remembered the great and happy people beyond the sea, when I thought of the vast and fertile land that lay blossoming and beckoning to all mankind beyond the setting sun. For there in Europe one sees this same private wealth, in less diffused form, it is true, concentrated in greatly fewer hands, but at the same time associated in many cases with things that go every way to dignify it or give it a lustre not its own,—associated with traditional family refine-

ment, with inoffensive unostentatious manners, with the practice of art and science and literature, and sometimes with the pursuit of toilsome and honorable personal adventure. Every one knows, on the other hand, how little *we* exact from our rich men ; how meagre and mean and creeping a race we permit our rich men to be, if their meanness is only flavored with profusion. I have not been favored with a great many rich acquaintance, but still I have known a not inconsiderable number, and I have never found them the persons to whom one would spontaneously resort in his least personal moments, or communicate with the most naturally in his hours of the purest intellectual elation or despondency. Of course I have known exceptions to this rule, men whose money only serves to illustrate their superior human sweetness, men of whose friendship everybody is proud. But as a general thing, nevertheless, one likes best to introduce one's foreign acquaintance, not to our commercial nabobs, who aggravate the price of house-rent and butcher's meat so awfully to us poor Newporters ; not to our fast financiers and bank cashiers, who on a salary of three thousand a year contrive to support in luxury, beside their proper wife and offspring, a dozen domestic servants and as many horses ; but to our, in the main, upright, self-respecting, and, if you please, untutored, but at the same time unsophisticated, children of toil, who are the real fathers and mothers of our future distinctive manhood.

No ; what makes one's pulse to bound when he remembers his own home under foreign skies, is never the rich man, nor the learned man, nor the distinguished man of any sort who illustrates its history, for in all these petty products almost every country may favorably, at all events tediously, compete with our own ; but it is all simply the abstract manhood itself of the country, man himself unqualified by convention, the man to whom all these conventional men have been simply introductory, the man who — let me say it — for the first time in human history finding himself in his own right erect under God's sky, and feeling himself in his own right the peer of every other man, spontaneously aspires and attains to a far freer and profounder culture of his nature than has ever yet illustrated humanity.

Shallow people call this pretension of ours the offspring of national vanity, and stigmatize it as implying the greatest immodesty in every one who asserts it. Is it not the same as saying, they ask, that ignorance is as good as experience, weakness as good as skill, nature as good as culture, the crude ore as good as the polished metal which is extracted from it ? I will show you the absurdity of this criticism in a few moments, when I show you the peculiar foundation which the sentiment in question, the sentiment of human equality, claims in our historic evolution and growth. For the present, I have a word more to say in regard to the contrasts of European and American thought and aspiration.

No American, who is not immersed in abject spread-eagleism,—that is to say, no American who has had the least glimpse of the rich social promise of our institutions, or of the free play they accord to the spiritual activities of our nature,—values the mere political prestige of his nation, or the repute it enjoys with other nations, as the true ground of its glory. Much less, of course, does he esteem the mere *personnel* of his government as conferring any distinction upon him. Loyalty, which is a strictly personal sentiment, has long given place even in the English bosom where it was native, to patriotism, which is a much more rational sentiment. Loyalty bears to patriotism the same relation that superstition bears to religion. The zealot worships God, not as an infinite Spirit of Love, but as a finite person: not for what He is inwardly in himself, but for what He may outwardly be to the worshipper. He adores him, not for what alone renders him worthy of adoration, namely, his essential humanity, that infinitely tender sympathy with his infirm creature which leads him forever to humble himself that the latter may be exalted, but simply because he is eminent in place and power above all beings, and so is able to do all manner of kindness to those who please him, and all manner of unkindness to those who displease him. Exactly so the loyalist worships his king or his queen,—not for their radiant human worth; not for the uses their great dignity promotes to the common or associated life;

in short, not from any rational perception of their inward adjustment to the place they occupy; but simply because they do occupy that eminent place, simply because they happen to be crowned king and crowned queen, traditional sources of honor and dishonor to their subjects. In both cases alike, the homage is purely blind or instinctive, and, though befitting children, is unworthy of adult men. Religion, on the contrary, clothes the Divine supremacy with essentially spiritual attributes, makes His perfection the perfection of character, the perfection of love and wisdom, and of power thence alone energized, so that no religious man worships God from choice or voluntarily, but spontaneously, or because he cannot help himself, so much does the overpowering loveliness constrain him. That is to say, every man truly worships God in the exact measure of his own unaffected goodness, purity, and truth. And it is thus precisely that the patriot loves his king or queen,—not for their traditional sanctity, not for their exalted privilege, not for their conventional remoteness, in short, from other men,—but for their willing nearness to them, that is, for their positive human use or worth, and consequent fitness to lead the great honest hearts they represent. In one word, what the patriot sees and loves in his king is his country and his country only; and he serves him, therefore, as the spiritually enlightened man serves God, not with a ceremonial or ritual devotion, but with a cordial or living one, with a service which only exalts,

instead of any longer degrading, either of the parties to it.

No wonder, then, that the sentiment of loyalty should have utterly died out of our blood, when even that higher sentiment of country, to which alone it ministered in the bosom of our English ancestry, has in its turn given place in *our* bosoms to a sentiment still higher, that of humanity. We are the descendants, not of English loyalists by any means, but of English patriots exclusively; that is, of men who valued royalty only so long as it served the common life, and when it grew tired of that service, and claimed only to be served in its turn, unhesitatingly suspended it by the neck, and sent its descendants skipping. And this English patriotism, which was itself a regenerate loyalty, or a love of country purified of all personal allegiance, has itself become glorified in our veins into a still grander sentiment,—that is, from a love of country has become exalted into a love of humanity. It is the truest glory any nation may boast, that the love it enkindles in the bosom of its children is the love of man himself; that the respect it engenders there for themselves is identical with the respect which is due to all men. As Americans, we love our country, it is true, but not because it is *ours* simply; on the contrary, we are proud to belong to it, because it is the country of all mankind, because she opens her teeming lap to the exile of every land, and bares her hospitable breast to whatsoever wears the human form. This is where

the ordinary European mind inevitably fails to do us any justice. The purblind piddling mercenaries of literature, like Dickens, and the ominous scribes and Pharisees of the Saturday Review,* have just enough of cheap wit to see and caricature the cordial complacency we feel in our virgin and beautiful mother; but it takes an acumen bred of no London police-courts, and an education of the heart which all the studies of Oxford will never yield, to see the rich human soul that vivifies that complacency, that burns away all its dross, and makes it laughable only to literary louts and flunkies who live by pandering to the prejudices of the average human understanding.

The American misses in European countries and institutions this exquisite human savor, this exquisite honor which is due to man alone, and this exquisite indifference which is due to persons. In European institutions,—I do not say in existing European *sentiment*, for that, no doubt, is greatly in advance of the institutions,—but in European institutions persons are everything and man comparatively nothing. It is always the skilled man, or the learned man, or the mighty man, or the noble man, in short the propertied or qualified man of some sort, that is had in reverence; never our common humanity itself, which, on the contrary, is starved in garrets in order that the man of quality may live in plenty, is ground to powder by toil in order to keep up his iniquitous state, is

* See Appendix A.

butchered in crowds to maintain his peace, and rots in prisons to avouch his purity. Abroad every American sees, of course and accordingly, any amount of merely political energy and efficiency, sees governments flourishing by the permanent demoralization of their people. He sees every appliance of luxurious art, all manner of imposing edifices, of elaborate gardens and pleasure-places, the deadliest arsenals of war, armies innumerable, and navies disciplined with infernal force, all consecrated to the sole purpose of keeping up the purely *political* status of the country, or aggrandizing its own selfish aims and repute to the eyes of other nations and its own people. And he cries aloud to his own heart, May America perish out of all remembrance, before what men blasphemously call public order finds itself promoted there by this costly human degradation! Disguise it as you will in your own weak, wilful way, in no country in Europe has the citizen as yet consciously risen into the man. In no country of Europe does the government consciously represent, or even so much as affect to represent, the unqualified manhood of the country, its lustrous human worth, the honest unadulterate blood of its myriad beautiful and loving bosoms, its fathers and mothers, its brothers and sisters, its sons and daughters, its husbands and wives, its lovers and friends, every throb of whose life is sacred with God's sole inspiration; but only the adulterate streams which course through the veins of some insignificant conven-

tional aristocracy. Take England itself for an example of the perfect truth of my allegations. We may easily do injustice to England just now; may easily forget the shining and proud pre-eminence which belongs to her political development among all the polities of the earth. Another nation so great, so vowed in its political form to freedom, so renowned for arms, for art, for industry, for the intelligence of its scholars, for its public and private morality, does not illustrate human annals; and yet, because she now thinks of herself before she thinks of us, because she listens to the prayer of her starving operatives before she listens to the demands of our betrayed nationality, we are ready to forget her glorious past, and pronounce her a miracle of selfishness. But no truly human virtue is compatible with an empty stomach; and England, like everybody else, must be allowed first of all to secure her own subsistence before she bestows a thought upon other people. I will not blame England, then, for her present timidity. I will never forget the inappreciable services she has rendered to the cause of political progress. But just as little can I be blind to the immense limitations she exhibits when measured by American humanitarian ideas. She claims to be the freest of European nations; and so she is, as I have already admitted, so far as her public or political life is concerned. But viewed internally, viewed as to her *social* condition, you observe such a destitution of personal freedom and ease and courtesy among

her children as distinguishes no other people, and absolutely shocks an American. Conventional routine, a wholly artificial morality, has so bitten itself into the life of the people, into the national manners and countenance even, that the kindly human heart within is never allowed to come to the surface, and what accordingly is meant among them for civility to each other is so coldly and grudgingly rendered as to strike the stranger like insult. The intensely artificial structure of society in England renders it inevitable in fact, that her people should be simply the worst-mannered people in Christendom. Indeed, I venture to say that no average American resides a year in England without getting a sense so acute and stifling of its hideous class-distinctions, and of the consequent awkwardness and *brusquerie* of its upper classes, and the consequent abject snobbery or inbred and ineradicable servility of its lower classes, as makes the manners of Choctaws and Potawatamies sweet and christian, and gives to a log-cabin in Oregon the charm of comparative dignity and peace.

For, after all, what do we prize in men? Is it their selfish or social worth? Is it their personal or their human significance? Unquestionably, only the latter. All the refinement, all the accomplishment, all the power, all the genius under heaven, is only a nuisance to us if it minister to individual vanity, or be associated with a sentiment of aloofness to the common life, to the great race which bears us upon her spotless bosom and nourishes

us with the milk of her own immortality. What is the joy we feel when we see the gifted man, the man of genius, the man of high conventional place of whatever sort, come down to the recognition of the lowliest social obligations,—what is it but a testimony that the purest personal worth is then most pure when it denies itself, when it leaps over the privileged interval which separates it from the common life, and comes down to identify itself with the commonest? This sentiment of human unity, of the sole original sacredness of man and the purely derivative sanctity of persons, no matter who they are, *is what we are born to*, and what we must not fail to assert with an emphasis and goodwill which may, if need be, make the world resound. For it is our very life, the absolute breath of our nostrils, which alone qualifies us to exist. I lived, recently, nearly a year in St. John's Wood in London, and was daily in the habit of riding down to the city in the omnibus along with my immediate neighbors, men of business and professional men, who resided in that healthy suburb, and fared forth from it every morning to lay up honest, toilsome bread for the buxom domestic angels who sanctified their homes, and the fair-haired cherubs who sweetened them. Very nice men, to use their own lingo, they were, for the most part; tidy, unpretending, irreproachable in dress and deportment; men in whose truth and honesty you would confide at a glance; and yet, after eight months' assiduous bosom solicitation of their hardened stolid visages,

I never was favored with the slightest overture to human intercourse from one of them. I never once caught the eye of one of them. If ever I came nigh doing so, an instant film would surge up from their more vital parts, if such parts there were, just as a Newport fog suddenly surges up from the cold remorseless sea, and wrap the organ in the dullest, fishiest, most disheartening of stares. They took such extreme pains never to look at one another, that I knew they must be living men, devoutly intent each on disowning the other's life; otherwise I could well have believed them so many sad well-seasoned immortals, revisiting their old London haunts by way of a nudge to their present less carnal satisfactions. I had myself many cherished observations to make upon the weather, upon the lingering green of the autumn fields, upon the pretty suburban cottages we caught a passing glimpse of, upon the endless growth of London, and other equally conservative topics; but I got no chance to ventilate them, and the poor things died at last of hope deferred. The honest truth is what Dr. Johnson told Boswell, that the nation is deficient in the human sentiment. "Dr. Johnson," says Boswell, "though himself a *stern, true-born Englishman*, and fully prejudiced against all other nations, had yet discernment enough to see, and candor enough to censure, the cold reserve among Englishmen toward strangers (of their own nation). 'Sir,' said he, 'two men of any other nation who are shown into a room together, at a house where they are both visitors, will immediately find

some conversation. But two Englishmen will probably go each to a different window and remain in obstinate silence. Sir, we do not, as yet,' proceeded the Doctor, 'understand the common rights of humanity.'"

These common rights of humanity of which Dr. Johnson speaks are all summed up in the truth of man's social equality; that is, every man's joint and equal dependence with every other man upon the association of his kind for all that he himself is or enjoys. These common rights of humanity have got political ratification in England, as they have got it nowhere else in Europe out of Switzerland; but the private life of England, as Dr. Johnson charges, is shockingly indifferent to them. The moral sentiment, the sentiment of what is exceptionally due to this, that, or the other *person*, utterly dominates in that sphere the social sentiment, the sentiment of what is habitually due to every man as man. It is this unchallenged primacy of the moral life over the social life of England, this intense sensibility among her scholars to personal claims over human claims, which so exalts her Pharisaic pride and abases her true spirituality, which leaves her outwardly the greatest and inwardly the poorest of peoples, and makes the homesick because better-nurtured foreigner feel, when exposed to it, how dismal and dingy the very heaven of heavens would become if once these odiously correct and lifeless white-cravatted and black-coated respectabilities should get the run of it.

You see at a glance that this penury of England in all spiritual regards is owing to the simple fact that not *man*, but *English-man*, is the key-note of her aspirations. European thought generally and at best is peninsular,— that is, *almost* insular,— in that it regards European culture as constituting the probable limits of the human mind. But English thought is absolutely insular, in that it makes England the actual measure of human development. Every Englishman who lives and dies an Englishman, that is to say, who has not been made by God's grace a partaker in heart of the *commonwealth* of mankind, or a spiritual alien from the mother that bore him, believes that not Europe, but England itself, one of the smallest corners of Europe, as Judæa was one of the smallest corners of Asia, furnishes the real *Ultima Thule* of human progress. This being the key-note of English thought, the pitch to which all its tunes are set, you are not surprised to see the sentiment dominating the whole strain of English character, till at last you find the Englishman not only isolating himself from the general European man, but each individual Englishman becoming a bristling independent unapproachable little islet to every other Englishman, ready, as Dr. Johnson describes them, to leap out of the windows rather than hold that safe and salutary parley with each other which God and nature urge them to; so that probably a huger amount of painful plethoric silence becomes annually accumulated under English ribs than befalls

the whole world beside, and an amount of spiritual numbness and imbecility generated which is not to be paralleled by anything this side of old Judæa. And it is exactly the rebound of his thought from all this social obstruction and poverty which causes the American wayfarer's heart to dance with glee when he remembers his own incorrect and exceptionable Nazareth, his own benighted but comfortable and unsuspecting fellow-sinners, who are said to sit sometimes with their tired feet as high as their head, who light their innocent unconscious pipes at everybody's fire, and who occasionally, when the sentiment of human brotherhood is at a white heat in their bosom, ask you, as a gentleman from Cape Cod once asked me at the Astor House table, the favor of being allowed to put his superfluous fat upon your plate, provided, that is, the fat is in no way offensive to you. That the forms in which human freedom expresses itself in these latitudes are open to just criticism in many respects, I cordially admit, and even insist; but he who sees the uncouth form alone, and has no feeling for the beautiful human substance within it, for the soul of fellowship that animates and redeems it of all malignity, would despise the shapeless embryo because it is not the full-formed man, and burn up the humble acorn because it is not yet the branching oak. But the letter is nothing, the spirit everything. The letter kills, the spirit alone gives life; and it is exclusively to this undeniable spiritual difference between Europe and

America, as organized and expressed in our own constitutional polity, that all our formal differences are owing. Our very Constitution binds us, that is to say, the very breath of our political nostrils binds us, to disown all distinctions among men, to disregard persons, to disallow privilege the most established and sacred, to legislate only for the common good, no longer for those accidents of birth or wealth or culture which spiritually individualize man from his kind, but only for those great common features of social want and dependence which naturally unite him with his kind, and inexorably demand the organization of such unity. It is this immense constitutional life and inspiration we are under which not only separate us from Europe, but also perfectly explain by antagonism that rabid hostility which the South has always shown towards the admission of the North to a fair share of government patronage, and which now provokes her to the dirty and diabolic struggle she is making to give human slavery the sanction of God's appointment.

When I said awhile ago that an American, as such, felt himself the peer of every man of woman born, I represented my hearers as asking me whether that claim was a righteous one; whether, in fact, he whose conscience should practically ratify it in application to himself would not thereby avouch his own immodesty,—confess himself devoid of that humility which is the life of true manhood. To this question I reply promptly, No! for this excellent

reason,— that the claim in question is by no means a distinctive personal claim, but a claim in behalf of every man. When, by virtue of our national genesis and genius, I claim before God and man a rightful equality with every other man, what precisely is it that I do ? Do I claim for myself an equality of wit, of learning, of talent, of benevolence, with this, that, or the other special person whom you may name as remarkable for those endowments ? Do I mean to allege my private personal equality with all other persons ; my equal claim, for example, to the admiring or sympathetic homage of mankind, with Shakespeare, with Washington, with Franklin ? No man who is not an ass can believe this ; and yet you perpetually hear the paid scribes of old-fogyism repeating the slander throughout the world, as if it were the most indisputable of truths. Nothing is more common than to hear persons who are disaffected to the humane temper of our polity affecting to quote the Declaration of Independence as saying that all men are *born* equal, and under cover of that audacious forgery exposing it to ridicule. The Declaration is guilty of no such absurdity. It does not say that all men are born equal, for it is notorious that they are born under the greatest conceivable inequalities,— inequalities of heart and head and hand,— inequalities even of physical form and structure ; but it says that, notwithstanding these inequalities, they are all *created* equal,— that is, are all equal before God, or can claim no superior merit one to another in his sight, being all

alike dependent upon his power, and possessing a precisely equal claim, therefore, each with the other, to the blessings of his impartial providence. The inequalities under which men are born, or which they inherit from their forefathers, are the needful condition of their individuality, of their various personal identity. The framers of the Declaration saw this as well as anybody, but they also saw, and so in effect said, that however much men may differ among themselves, it was yet not these personal differences which commend them to each other's true respect, but rather that common human want which identifies them all in the Divine regard by making them all equal retainers of His sovereign bounty. No man not a fool can gainsay this, and no man not a fool, consequently, can pretend that when I urge this constitutional doctrine of human equality I have anything whatever to say of myself personally regarded, or *as discriminated from other persons*, but only as SOCIALLY regarded,—that is, as *united* with all other persons. In short, it is not a claim urged on my own behalf alone, but in behalf of every other man who is too ignorant or too debased by convention to assert it for himself.

Our political Constitution, like every other great providential stride in human affairs, was intentionally educative; was designed to gather us together under the discipline of well-disposed but often sorely tried and disheartened political guides, in order finally to draw us fully forth out of the land of dark-

ness and the house of bondage. The sole great aim of our political Constitution has been gradually to induct us out of errors and evils, which no Pagan Jew was ever more slow and reluctant to suspect than we are, into a new and far more grandly human consciousness, into a land of everlasting righteousness and peace. Not one of its literal framers ever had the faintest foresight of its ultimate scientific destination, any more than Moses had of the Messiah whom he prefigured; any more than Isaiah or Jeremiah had of the tremendous spiritual scope of the prophecies which uttered themselves through their rapt and dizzy imaginations. The scientific promise of our polity is only to be understood by watching its practical unfolding, by observing the expansive influence it has hitherto exerted, and is now more than ever exerting, upon the popular mind and upon the popular heart. View it either positively or negatively, its influence is the same. In its negative aspect,—its aspect toward Egypt, which is the European conception of man's true state on earth,—it denies all absoluteness both to persons and institutions, by boldly resolving what is the highest of personalities, namely, the king, and what is the most sacred of institutions, namely, the Church, both alike from a power into the servant of a power, from a righteousness into the symbol of a righteousness, from a substance into the shadow of a substance; this substance itself being those great disregarded instincts of human unity or fraternity which all along the course of

history have been patiently soliciting scientific recognition, in order to put on organic form and cover the earth with holiness and peace. In its positive aspect, — the aspect it bears toward Canaan, — which means the supremacy of man's associated life over his individual one, it makes my private righteousness, or that which inwardly relates me to God, utterly posterior to, and dependent upon, my public righteousness, or that which relates me to my fellow-man. How is it possible, therefore, that its practical effect should be otherwise than educative, — educative, too, in the very profoundest manner, that is, out of all evil into all good? Its direct influence is to modify or enlarge my private conscience, the consciousness I have of myself as a moral being, a being independent of my kind and capable of all manner of arrogant presumptuous private hope toward God, into a public conscience, into a consciousness of myself as above all things a *social* being most intimately and indissolubly one with my kind, and incapable therefore of any blessing which they do not legitimately share. It laughs at the pretensions of any person however reputable, and of any institution however venerable, to claim an absolute divine sanctity, — that is, a sanctity irrespective of his or its unaffected human worth; and it gradually so inflames the mind with its own august spiritual meaning, so quickens it with its own vivid and palpitating divine substance, that the conscience which is governed by it of necessity finds itself regenerating, finds itself

expanding from a petty drivelling and squeaking witness of one's own righteousness, into the clear and ringing and melodious testimony of God's sole righteousness in universal man.

The European priest and king were at best only theoretically perfect, both alike having always been actually below the spirit of their great office. Their office was purely ministerial and typical, while they themselves had always the stupidity to regard it as magisterial and final, as constituting in fact its own end. The office of the Christian priesthood has always been to typify the spotless inward purity, the office of the Christian royalty to typify the boundless outward power, which, by virtue of the Incarnation, or of God's personal indwelling in human nature, shall one day characterize universal man. Every man's heart and mind, by reason of their infinite source, insatiably crave, the one that perfect righteousness which is peace towards God, the other that perfect knowledge which is command over Nature. And the priest and the king have existed only to authenticate this insatiate longing, and formally prefigure its eventual exact fulfilment. European culture accordingly was established upon this typical and transitory basis of Church and State, the one representing the infinite Divine righteousness which is incarnated in universal man ; the other the infinite Divine power which is engendered of such righteousness.* But no actual churchman and no actual statesman ever

* See Appendix B.

grasped the grand humanitarian prophecy of his office. Each supposed his office to be absolutely, not representatively, sacred ; supposed it to be valid in itself, and not solely for its uses to the social development of the race. The priest claimed for the Church an absolute divine sanctity, a sanctity irrespective of the education it ministered to the popular heart ; and the king claimed for the State an absolute divine authority, an authority undervived from the elevation it afforded to the popular thought : so that the sum of European culture in a religious way has scarcely amounted to anything more than a practical desecration of the priestly office, or a secularizing of the Church by a diffusion of the priestly prerogative among the laity ; as the sum of its political progress has consisted in limiting the royal prerogative, or democratizing the government, by diffusing it among the people. In short, Protestantism and constitutional liberty are the topmost waves of European progress, the bound beyond which European thought cannot legitimately go,— the one denying the Church as an absolute Divine substance, the other denying the State as an absolute Divine form. No overt aim is there practised towards a positive realization of the idea embodied in our institutions, which is that of a perfect human society or fellowship, in which every member shall be alike sacred before God and alike privileged before man. The ingrained inveterate Pharisaism of the English mind is so frankly obtuse to the conception of a Divine or universal righteous-

ness on the earth, and the complacent Sadduceism of Continental thought begets such an indifference to that great expectation, that one can see no hope for Europe socially but in the absorption of her effete nationalities by a new Northern invasion, and the consequent infusion of a ruddier blood into the veins of her languid populations.

But however this may be, we in this hemisphere, at all events, have no European problems to solve, and are not called upon in any manner to repeat the European experience. We *inherit* the solution which Europe has already given to her own peculiar problems, and start upon our distinctive career from the basis of her most approved experience. Europe has made religion an affair of the laity as much as of the clergy; government, an affair of the people as much as of the aristocracy. *We inherit her ripest culture in both of these particulars.* We inherit Protestantism and constitutional liberty; but there is this vast difference between us and them, *we begin where they leave off.* Like all heirs, we enter upon a full fruition of the estate which it cost them their best blood to found and mature. Thus Protestantism is not to us the bright expansive heaven to which all *their* religious aspiration ascends. It is rather the solid, compact, somewhat dingy and disagreeable earth upon which our feet are planted, only in order to survey entirely new and infinitely more inviting heavens. And constitutional liberty is not the welcome haven to us it has ever been to them, is not to us the same

broad protective anchorage to which, over weary wastes of ocean and through alternate sickening calm and driving tempest, their political bark has been always steering. It is, on the contrary, our port of departure, whence with swelling sails we confidently voyage forth to tempt unknown seas, and lay open lands as yet untrodden by human feet. Protestantism vacates the priestly pretension, by turning religion into an affair of the congregation. We applaud this, but go further, in making religion an affair of the individual conscience exclusively, with which neither priest nor congregation has the least right to intermeddle. So constitutional liberty, which is the European ideal of liberty, vacates the divine right of kings, by complicating the royal power with numerous cunning constitutional checks and balances. But the liberty we assert, or which constitutes our ideal, does not flow from any man-made constitution under heaven, but is one on the contrary which all such constitutions are bound under fatal penalties simply and servilely to reflect, being the liberty which is identical with the God-made constitution of the human mind itself, and which consists in the inalienable right of every man to believe according to the unbribed inspiration of his own heart, and to act according to the unperverted dictates of his own understanding. In short, they affirm the inalienable sanctity and freedom of the nation as against other nations; we, the inalienable sanctity and freedom of the subject as against the nation.

They say that every nation is sacred by virtue of its nationality, or has an inviolable title to the respect and homage of all other nations. We say that every man is similarly sacred by virtue of his humanity, and has an inviolable title to the love and respect of all other men. Thus they truly assert the Divine Incarnation in humanity; but they limit it to the public sphere of life, to the national will and the national intelligence. We do this, but we do much more also, for we practically ratify the Incarnation as a private no less than a public truth, as sanctifying the individual life indeed far more profoundly than the common one. They laugh at us because we set the pulpit to the tune of the streets, and expect our governors to reflect the wisdom of the farm-yard and the factory. But this is because they do not know that we, unlike themselves, are without ecclesiastical and political conscience, our very Church and State being themselves exclusively human and social. We are no mere civil polity, designed, like those of the Old World, to lead men out of barbarism into civilization. On the contrary, we find them citizens, and out of citizens aspire to make them men. We are at bottom nothing more and nothing less than a broad human society or brotherhood, of which every man is in full membership by right of manhood alone; and what we seek to do is to turn our nominal Church and State into the unlimited service of this society. In fact, we declare the childhood of the race forever fairly past,

and its manhood at least entered upon. We deny the ability of any church, Catholic or Protestant, to sanctify any human being, or even enhance the sanctity he derives from his creative source. We deny the ability of any government, arbitrary or constitutional, to enfranchise the human mind, or even enhance the freedom which inheres in its God-given constitution. We maintain, on the contrary, that the Church can only and at best *develop* the righteousness which every man derives in infinite measure from God ; and that the State can only and at best *promote* the freedom which Divinely inheres in his very form as man : so leaving every man's religion to the sole inspiration of the Divine Good in his own heart, every man's freedom to the sole arbitrament of the Divine Truth in his own understanding. In short, we practically affirm the literal verity of the Divine Incarnation in every form of human nature, the unlimited indwelling of the infinite Godhead in every man of woman born ; so turning every man by the sheer pith of his manhood into mitred priest and crowned king, or avouching ourselves finally to our own consciousness and the world's willing recognition as a faultless human society, instinct with God's unspeakable delight and approbation.*

Such, my friends, I conceive to be our undeniable inward significance as a nation. Such the bright consummate flower of manhood, which is spiritually

* See Appendix C.

disengaging itself from the coarse obscuring husks of our literal Democracy, consisting in the gradual but complete subjugation of the selfish instinct in our bosoms to the service of the social instinct. Such is the great and righteous temper of mind to which we are Divinely begotten; such the paternal animating spirit that shapes our constitutional polity, that originally gave us birth as a nation, and that even now, in this day of seeming adversity, gives us a conscience of rectitude and invincible might which is itself incomparably richer than all prosperity. It is idle to talk,—as silly people, however, will talk, as all people will talk whose gross grovelling hearts go back to *the flesh-pots of Egypt, when they eat bread to the full*,—it is idle to talk of our political troubles as springing up out of the ground, as having no graver origin than party fanaticism or folly. These troubles, on the contrary, are the inevitable fruit of our very best growth, the sure harbingers, I am persuaded, of that rising Sun of Righteousness whose beams shall never again know eclipse. They are merely an evidence, on a larger scale and in a public sphere, of the discord which every righteous man perceives at some time or other to exist between his essential human spirit and his perishable animal flesh. For every nation is in human form, is in fact but an aggregate or composite form of manhood, greatly grander and more complex than the simple forms of which it is made up, but having precisely the same intense unity within itself, and claiming, like

each of them, a quickening controlling spirit, and an obedient servile body. This animating controlling spirit of our national polity, like that of our own private souls, is Divine, comes from God exclusively, and is only revealed never exhausted, only embodied or empowered never belittled or enfeebled, by the literal symbols in which human wisdom contrives to house it. That part of the letter of our Constitution which best reveals the majestic human spirit that animates our polity is of course its preamble. But the real divinity of the nation, its vital imperishable holiness, resides not in any dead parchment, but only in the righteous unselfish lives of those who see in any constitution but the luminous letter of their inward spiritual faith, but the visible altar of their invisible worship, and rally around it therefore with the joyous unshrinking devotion not of slaves but of men.

Now, such being the undoubted spirit of our polity, what taint was there in its material constitution, in our literal maternal inheritance, to affront this righteous paternal spirit and balk its rich promise, by turning us its children from an erect sincere hopeful and loving brotherhood of men intent upon universal aims, into a herd of greedy luxurious swine, into a band of unscrupulous political adventurers and sharpers, the stink of whose corruption pervades the blue spaces of ocean, penetrates Europe, and sickens every struggling nascent human hope with despair?

The answer leaps at the ears ; it is Slavery, and Slavery only. This is the poison which lurked almost harmless at first in our body politic, and to which its righteous soul is an utter stranger ; this is the curse we inherited from the maternal English Eve out of whose somewhat loose lascivious lap we sprung. But of late years the poison has grown so rank and pervasive, making its citadel, indeed, the very heart of the commonwealth, or those judicial and legislative chambers whence all the tides of its activity proceed, that each successive political administration of the country proves more recreant to humanity than its predecessor, until at last we find shameless God-forsaken men, holding high place in the government, become so rabid with its virus as to mistake its slimy purulent ooze for the ruddy tide of life, and commend its foul and fetid miasm to us as the fragrant breath of assured health. It is easy enough to falsify the divinity which is shaping our constitutional action, wherever a will exists to do so. Men whose most cherished treasure can be buttoned up in their breeches pocket, and whose heart, of course, is with their treasure, are doubtless panting to convince the country that we have already done enough for honor, and the sooner a sham peace is hurried up the better. It only needs a wily wolf of this sort to endue himself here and there in sheep's clothing, and bleat forth a cunning pathetic lament over the causeless misfortunes which have befallen our bread-and-butter interests, to see dozens of

stupid sheep taking up in their turn the sneaking hypocritical bleat, and preparing their innocent fleece for his dishonest remorseless shears. The friends of Mammon are numerous in every community; but, blessed be God, they nowhere rule in the long run. They are numerous enough to give an odious flavor to the broth; but they never constitute its body. It is impossible that we should err in this great crisis of our destiny, a crisis to which that of our national birth or independence yields in dignity and importance, as much as body yields to soul, flesh to spirit, childhood to manhood. For this is the exact crisis we are in; the transition from youth to manhood, from appearance to reality, from passing shadow to deathless substance. Every man and every nation of men encounters somewhere in its progress a critical hour, big with all its future fate; and woe be to the man, woe be to the nation, who believes that this sacred responsibility can be trifled with. To every man and to every nation it means eternal life or eternal death; eternal liberty or eternal law; the heaven of free spontaneous order, or the hell of enforced prudential obedience. There is no man who hears me who does not know something of this bitter sweat and agony; whose petty trivial cares have not been dignified and exalted by some glimpse of this hidden inward fight; who has not at times heard the still small voice of truth on the one hand counselling him to do the right thing though ruin yawn upon his hopes,— coun-

selling him *to force himself* to do the honest thing though it cost him tears of blood,—and the earthquake voice of hell on the other, or the fiery breath of passion infuriated by long starvation, doing its best to drown and devour it. Our national life, believe me, is at that exact pass in this awful moment, and nowhere else. It is the hour of our endless rise into all beautiful human proportions, into all celestial vigor and beatitude, or of our endless decline into all infernality and uncleanness, and into the inevitable torments which alone discipline such uncleanness. And we must not hesitate for a moment to fight it manfully out to its smiling blissful end, feeling that it is not our own battle alone, that we are not fighting for our own country only, for our own altars and firesides as men have fought hitherto, but for the altars and firesides of universal man, for the ineradicable rights of human nature itself. Let bloated European aristocracies rejoice in our calamities; let the mutton-headed hereditary legislators of England raise a shout of insult and exultation over our anticipated downfall; the honest, unsophisticated masses everywhere will do us justice, for they will soon see, spite of all efforts to blind them, that we occupy in this supreme moment no petty Thermopylæ guarding some paltry Greece, but the broad majestic pass that commands the deathless wealth and worth of human nature itself, the Thermopylæ of the human mind; they will soon see, in fact, that our flags are waving, our

trumpets sounding, our cannon showering their deathful hail, not merely to avenge men's outraged political faith and honor, but to vindicate the inviolable sanctity of the human form itself, which for the first time in history is Divinely bound up with that faith and honor.

This is the exact truth of the case. The political tumble-down we have met with is no accident, as unprincipled politicians would represent it. It is the fruit of an inevitable expansion of the human mind itself, of an advancing social consciousness in the race, an ever-widening sense of human unity, which will no longer be content with the old channels of thought, the old used-up clothes of the mind, but irresistibly demands larger fields of speculation, freer bonds of intercourse and fellowship. We have only frankly to acknowledge this great truth in order to find the perturbation and anxiety which now invade our unbelieving bosoms dispelled; in order to hear henceforth, in every tone of the swelling turbulence that fills our borders, no longer forebodings of disease, despair, and death, but prophecies of the highest health, of kindling hope, of exuberant righteousness, and endless felicity for every man of woman born. "I was once," says an old writer, "I was once in a numerous crowd of spirits, in which everything appeared at sixes and sevens: they complained, saying that now a total destruction was at hand, for in that crowd nothing appeared in consociation, but everything loose and confused, and this made them fear

destruction, which they supposed also would be total. But in the midst of their confusion and disquiet, I perceived a soft sound, angelically sweet, in which was nothing but what was orderly. The angelic choirs thus present were within or at the centre, and the crowd of persons to whom appertained what was disorderly were without or at the circumference. This flowing angelic melody continued a long time, and it was told me that hereby was signified how the Lord rules confused and disorderly things which are upon the surface, namely, *by virtue of a pacific principle in the depths or at the centre; whereby the disorderly things upon the surface are reduced to order, each being restored from the error of its nature.*" The pacific and restorative principle which in the same way underlies all our political confusion and disorder, and which will irresistibly shape our national life to its own righteous and orderly issues, is the rising sentiment of human society or fellowship, the grand, invincible faith of man's essential unity and brotherhood. The social conscience, the conscience of what is due to every man as man, having the same divine origin and the same divine destiny with all other men, is becoming preternaturally quickened in our bosoms, and woe betide the church, woe betide the state, that ventures to say to that conscience, Thus far shalt thou go, and no further!

Slavery has this incredible audacity. Slavery, which is the only institution of our European inheritance we have left unmodified, confronts and

spits upon this rising tide of God's righteousness in the soul of man. Slavery boldly denies what all our specific culture affirms, namely, the inviolable sanctity of human affection in every form, the inviolable freedom of human thought in every direction. The cultivated intelligence of the race abhors the claim of any human being to possess an *absolute* property in any other being, that is, a property unvivified by the other's unforced, spontaneous gift. Slavery affirms this diabolic pretension,—affirms the *unqualified* title of the master to outrage, if need be, the sacredest instincts of natural affection in the slave, and to stifle at need his feeblest intellectual expansion. Accordingly, the heart of man, inspired by God and undepraved by Mammon, pronounces slavery with no misgiving an unmitigated infamy; and the intelligence of man, thence enlightened, declares that its empire shall not be extended. We have no right to say that evil shall not exist where it already does exist without our privity; but we have not only all manner of right, both human and divine, to say that its existence shall not be promoted by our active connivance; it is our paramount wisdom as men, and our paramount obligation as citizens, to say so. Such, at all events, is our exact social attitude with respect to slavery. Every unsophisticated soul of man feels it to be what it actually is, namely, the ultimate or most general form and hence the king of all the evil pent up in human nature; so that when *it* once disappears by the

clear indignant refusal of the human mind any longer actively to co-operate with it, all those interior and subtler shapes of evil which now infest us, and are held together by it as the viscera of the body are held together by the skin, will be dissipated along with it. We know not when the hour of this great salvation shall strike. We only know that as God is just and sovereign it must strike ere long, and that when it does strike the morning stars of a richer creation than has yet been seen on earth will sing together, and all the sons of God in every subtlest ineffable realm of his dominion shout for joy. Our government itself is waking up from its long trance; is beginning to perceive that there is something sacreder than commerce on earth,— that the interests of this very commerce, in fact, will best be promoted by first of all recognizing that there are depths in the human soul, demands of immaculate righteousness and assured peace, which all the pecuniary prosperity of the world can never satisfy. In short, the government is fast coming, let us hope, to a consciousness of its distinctively social or human function, by practically confessing that its supreme responsibility is due only to man, and no longer to persons, or infuriated sectional exactions. Of course, in pursuing this career, it will become gradually converted from the mere tool it has hitherto been for adroit political knaves to do what they please with, into a grandly social force, reflecting every honest human want, fulfilling every upright human

aspiration. What matters it, then, if we forfeit the empty political prestige we have hitherto enjoyed with European *statesmen*? Let us only go on overtly to inaugurate that promised perfect society on earth, all whose officers shall be *peace*, and its sole exactors *righteousness*, by practically acknowledging on all occasions the infinite Divine Good enshrined in man's heart, the infinite Divine Truth enthroned in his understanding, and we shall fast attain to a social standing in the eyes of European *peoples* which shall grandly compensate our mere political disasters, and do more to modify the practice of European statesmen themselves than anything else we could possibly do.

In this state of things, how jealously should we watch the Congress to-day assembling at Washington! How clear should be the watchword we telegraph to guide their deliberations! Have *we* indeed no higher monition for our legislature than old heathen Rome supplied to hers, namely, *to see that the Republic suffer no damage*? The body is much, but it is not the soul. The Republic is much, but it is not all. It is much as a means, but nothing as an end. It is much as a means to human advancement, but nothing as its consummation. It is much as an onward march of the race, it is nothing whatever as its final victory and rest. Let us be sure that, so far as we are concerned, our legislators understand this. Let them know that we value the Republic so much, only because we value man more; that we value

peace, prosperity, and wealth not as ends, but as means to an end, which is justice, truth, and mercy, in which alone man's real peace, his true prosperity, and his abiding wealth reside, and which will be ours only so long as we are faithful to the gospel of human freedom and equality. For my part, if I thought that our rulers were going to betray in this agonizing hour the deathless interest confided to them,— if I thought that Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Seward were going at last to palter with the sublime instincts of peace and righteousness that elevated them to power and give them all their personal prestige, by making the least conceivable further concession to the obscene demon of Slavery,— then I could joyfully see Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Seward scourged from the sacred eminence they desile, yea more, could joyfully see our boasted political house itself laid low in the dust forever, because in that case its stainless stars and stripes would have sunk from a banner of freemen into a dishonored badge of the most contemptible people on earth; a people that bartered away the fairest spiritual birthright any people ever yet were born to, for the foulest mess of material pottage ever concocted of shameless lust and triumphant fraud.

APPENDIX.

A.—PAGE 10.

THIS able but unscrupulous paper is an involuntary and therefore most reliable witness of the utter worthlessness, for all social purposes, of the extremest culture of the head, which is moral culture, when weighed against the slenderest culture of the heart, which alone is spiritual culture. It seems to have had no more genuine mission than to show the rank and festering selfishness which has eaten out the vitals of the old European decency, coming now at last to the surface to corrode and consume every traditional usage of humane and sympathetic literary art which has hitherto masked its presence and limited its activity. If the Saturday Review fairly represent the scholarly *animus* of England,—if its flippant, transparent Pharisaism, its puerile self-complacency, its wanton insolence, its truculent arrogance, exhibited toward every form of intellectual independence,—except, as in the case of John Mill, where a great reputation sanctifies it,—and toward every the most honest suggestion of social advance, fitly represent the academical consciousness of that country,—one can only exclaim, Alas! how changed from its former self! *A land* (in an intellectual sense) *of deserts and pits, a land of drought and the shadow of death, a land no man passes through, and where no man dwells.* Certainly honest John Bull was never before so sophisticated,—degraded from a fat savory succulent juicy beef, to a lean stringy sinewy tendinous veal,—from the superb contented disdainful monarch of broad meadows and glittering streams, to the blatant and menacing and butting challenger of every innocent scarlet rag that flutters along private lane or public highway. It is English middle-class manners made conscious of their own inmost snobbery, and trying to cover it up under an affectation of coarse and vulgar effrontery towards superior people.

B. — PAGE 24.

THE State as a civil polity is wholly contingent upon the Church as an ecclesiasticism. Thus, throughout European history you see the Christian priest uniformly consecrating the Christian king. In the earlier infantile or Catholic centuries this beautiful ritual had some tender human significance; but it is now a senseless ceremonial. In modern Europe, just as in old Judæa, the Church no longer preserves its spiritual priority to the State, but has fallen contentedly behind it; the pure feminine heart of the world succumbing everywhere to the needs of its corrupt lordly head. The great Napoleon, animated with the spirit and armed with the prestige of the Revolution, felt so sheer a contempt for this frivolous European priesthood and its lapsed prerogative, that he did not hesitate at his coronation to snatch the coronet of the Empress Josephine from the hands of the officiating priest and place it himself on her brow; thus clearly proclaiming, by a great symbolic act infinitely beyond his own besotted thought, two things: — 1. That the veil of the temple, which had hitherto shut out the people from the holy of holies, was now actually as well as typically rent; thus, that the age of types and shadows had expired by its own limitation, and that man stood henceforth face to face with spiritual substance, with eternal realities: 2. That upon whomsoever the people should confer sovereignty, they conferred sanctity as well, or that in the elect of the people, as he claimed to be, priest and king, goodness and truth, right and might, should be indissolubly blent. And you now see the present Napoleon diligently finishing up what his predecessor began, that is to say, depriving the first clergyman in Europe of all right to his slenderest remaining foothold upon her soil; so that the Papacy will ere long come as near as possible to justifying the theologic fiction of disembodied existences, and sink, like those curious remains of the early *flora* and *fauna* of the earth which we treasure in museums, into a mere fossil memorial to future ages of the giant size to which, in the infancy of society, men's imbecility and presumption in respect to Divine things had attained.

The Church with us is of course exposed to no such coarse imperial insult, as the State is exposed to no such brutal revolutionary invasion. Why? Simply because our Church and State are both of them purely *social* institutions, or have no proper life apart from the uses they promote to the great society which maintains them. Our Church admits of all manner of sectarian diversity; our State is the fusion of all manner of national oppugnancies: because the only altar of God we recognize are the



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